

Dan Walwin  
*Preprogrammes*  
17.09.–30.10.2022

The video works of Dan Walwin (lives and works in Amsterdam, NL) operate within a drifting mode—scenery and movement possess a hypnotic presence, yet at the same time appear dissociatively disconnected. The mediums of sound, text and sculpture are important components in the spatial presentation of his videos. Walwin experiments with the means of filmic staging and its affective potentials. Instead of merging into a narrative, individual elements stand side by side and seem to follow their own logic. Paradoxical connections, disturbances and deviations give the impression of an audiovisual system whose inner mechanics are faltering.

For *Preprogrammes*, Walwin has produced a new video work, *Lost Light* (2022), which is projected large-scale onto a freestanding wall in the exhibition space. Comparable to a guidance system, red and green bands of light trace the architecture of the hall and connect the exhibition's upper and lower levels. Individual elements of the spatial setting, such as sound insulation panels and the colour scheme, reappear in the film's imagery, interlinking the video with the presentation space.

Although the video plays with common patterns of cinematic narration, the individual scenes are not tied together by a linear narrative resulting from the interaction of filmed action and dialogue. Rather, the image and text layers operate separately from one another, in the sense that the spoken texts are not directly related to the setting and the actions of the characters.

Over the course of a hot August day, the video follows three people drifting through the city of Amsterdam. Alongside scenes in populated inner-city locations, others take place in more undefined spaces, in suburbia or maybe near the airport. Eventually, that evening all three characters attend a small balcony party together with other guests.

This is followed by a rather peculiar procession: at dusk, four people push a car down the street and a fifth carries an anchor behind them. These "pilgrims" perform a classic, dramaturgical device: the chorus, which reflects on the action from a different vantage point.

As the three characters drift through the city and the day, they recite texts in Dutch, which they appear to receive as external input through earphones. The narratives to which the characters lend their voices seem curt and fragmentary, more narrative rudiments and hints than actual stories. Whether the fragments can be combined into a single story remains to be seen. Nevertheless, something resembling an overarching theme can be identified, connecting the imagery and text: leaving the city only to re-enter it.

In addition, Walwin's work *2015, 2016* (2022) is presented in the first-floor gallery. In this piece, the camera scans an installation of images, objects and texts arranged along a construction site fence in a wasteland overgrown with reeds. In amongst this scene, a person lies face down on the ground, mechanically waving their arm. The video was created as part of an examination of the idea and praxis of the archive. Condensed into a single tableau, Walwin brings together earlier works with materials related to events in 2015. The video was recorded with a motion control camera, in which the camera's path is mediated by a human but performed by a robot.

Similar to the way in which this work operates as a compilation of choreographed individual elements, the more prominently presented video *Lost Light* acts like a broken catalogue of memories triggered by individual motifs. These flash up several times and interweave the different scenes, comprising images such as a pool, a dog, a wig etc. Another group of motifs consists of the means of transport and infrastructure that make it possible to leave and (re)enter the city: trains, cars, a ferry or a tram. Despite this web of motifs, the overall impression remains fragmentary, as if the individual scenes and depictions were part of an open archive of cinematic narrative devices. The video thus develops more through a wealth of meaningful details and notable everyday observations than towards a meaningful order or "grand narrative."

With this in mind, the script is similarly a convergence of isolated scenes and disparate details, flowing together to form unlikely connections. Walwin has transposed some narrative details from the book *Deep Deception* (2022),<sup>1</sup> which reveals a covert espionage operation by British police through the testimonies of five women. The women were activists in the environmental movement of the 1980s and 90s and were spied on by their partners, who were later revealed to be undercover cops. These edits are then interspersed among a wider pool of memories in

which friends and acquaintances of the artist recall events from the arbitrarily chosen year 2019. These details are enmeshed further with elements borrowed from the plot of British composer Benjamin Britten's music drama *Curlew River* (1964), which itself combines elements from a Japanese Noh play and the medieval mystery play. It is about a mother who is searching for her kidnapped child. While crossing the eponymous river on a ferry, she learns that her child is no longer alive. In addition to referencing this tragic story, inspiration is taken from the way in which different times and cultural contexts are layered on top of each other in *Curlew River*, as well as from dramaturgical devices such as the chorus or the unconventional staging and performance practices, in which the boundaries between performers, director and bystanders are constantly shifting and blurring.

The effects of staging and artificiality associated with the separation of image and text layers allow *Lost Light* to function in places like a musical without music. However, the work is also largely determined by its sound, such as accentuated ambient noise, sound effects or variations in the interaction of image and sound. In their configuration, these function more as equal elements as opposed to a soundtrack that is imposed upon the images.

Accordingly, *Lost Light* focuses on the places and environments through which the characters move, rather than solely on people concerned. In part, the work can also be seen as a study of the highly controlled environment of a city (with "dam" in its name) that owes its existence to the regulation of water. And so, water appears again and again as a leitmotif in the video. A kind of play within a play, set on Amsterdam's Spui Square, revolves around the water motif: under the pedagogical guidance of a woman, children pump fresh drinking water into paper cups and distribute them among bystanders and passers-by. The woman then gives a short lecture about water, which remains cryptic and, like the action itself, occupies a blurred area between sense and nonsense. On a psycho-

logical level, regulating water might find its equivalent in restraining, controlling, and sublimating drives and emotions, with the persistent threat of leakage or flood putting things in jeopardy.

In particular the separation of text and image, but also a large number of other discontinuities and breaks undermine the impression of a spatially and temporally uniform film reality; rather, different layers of reality seem to overlap. It is possible then, that *Lost Light* not only reflects an external reality, but also an internal memory process. Not only does the video follow three characters through Amsterdam; it also follows memory processes that dig through different sediments of time. It's like trying to reconstruct an event from a web of facts and myths. In doing so, you encounter clues and evidence that may only indicate a discrepancy, but also may point to a catastrophe that fundamentally questions your entire world view and conduct, as if your own perspective had been rendered a product of far-reaching deception, or as if you had deliberately ignored an obvious fact that cast everything in a different light.

<sup>1</sup>Helen Steel et al., *Deep Deception. The story of the spy-cops network by the women who uncovered the shocking truth*, (London: Ebury, 2022).

Recently, this espionage operation also left its mark upon German jurisdiction. An American environmental activist was spied on by one of the undercover British police agents during the protests against the G8 summit in Heiligendamm in 2007. He filed a lawsuit against this and, on October 7th, 2022, the administrative court in Schwerin declared the use of the undercover agent, who was acting on behalf of the state police in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, to be illegal.

Cf. Oltermann, Philip and Evans, Rob: "British police spy unlawfully operated in Germany, court finds" in *Guardian*, 11.10.2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/oct/11/british-police-spy-unlawfully-operated-in-germany-court-finds>, accessed on 13.10.2022.

Dan Walwin (born 1986, GB) lives and works in Amsterdam, NL. *Preprogrammes* is his first solo show in Germany.

Solo shows (selection):

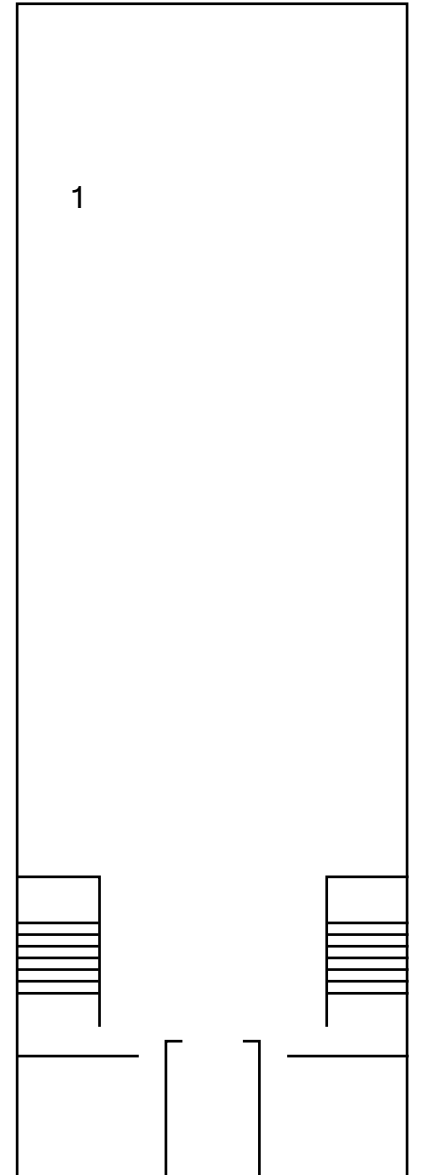
*Like clock*, David Dale Gallery, Glasgow, GB, 2021; *True place*, Center for Contemporary Arts Prague, Prague, CZ, 2019; *Show called spies*, Galerie Juliette Jongma, Amsterdam, NL, 2017; *Winds*, Cell Project Space, London, GB, 2015; *Sun room, P/////AKT*, Amsterdam, NL, 2015.

Group shows (selection):

*Enchant embrace them you odd peninsula*, Kunstfort Vijfhuizen, Amsterdam, NL, 2022; *Vordemberge-Gildewart Award*, KM21, The Hague, NL, 2020; *Town at Edge of Garden at Edge of Town*, Post, Kaunas, LT, 2019; *À Cris Ouverts*, 6th Rennes Biennale, Rennes, FR, 2018; *Even if it's Jazz, or the Quiet Storm*, Nest, The Hague, NL, 2018; *Over hang*, W139, Amsterdam, NL, 2017; *Dorothea van Stetten Kunstpreis*, Kunstmuseum Bonn, Bonn, DE, 2016; *Inflected Objects*, Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, NL, and Future Gallery, Berlin, DE, 2016.

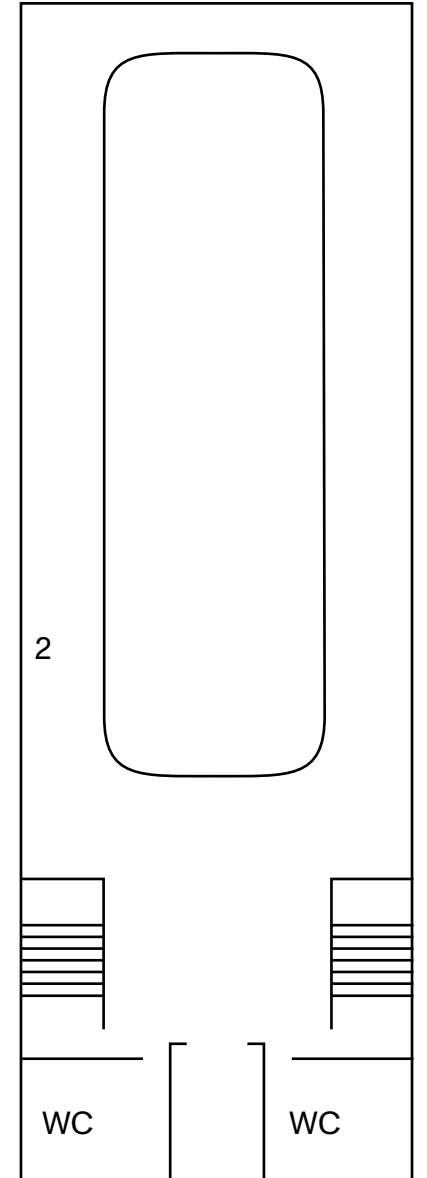
1  
Dan Walwin  
*Lost Light*, 2022  
4K Video, Sound  
26:57 min.

Hall



2  
Dan Walwin  
2015, 2016, 2022  
4K Video  
3:21 min.

Gallery



## Programme

Fri, 16 Sep 2022, 7 pm  
Opening with speeches from  
Heinrich Dietz (Kunstverein Freiburg)  
and Ulrike Pulzer (Consulate General  
of the Kingdom of the Netherlands)

Thu, 22 Sep 2022, 7 pm  
Curator's tour with Heinrich Dietz

Thu, 13 Oct 2022, 7 pm  
Guided tour with Theresa Rößler

Sat, 29 Oct 2022, 7 pm  
*World Metres from Here*  
Event curated by Dan Walwin

## Opening hours

Tue–Sun, 12 am–6 pm  
Thu, 12 am–8 pm  
Mon closed

Entrance: 2€ / 1,50€  
Thursdays free  
Members free

This exhibition has been supported by:



Königreich der Niederlande

Kunstverein Freiburg is funded by:

